



## **History. Tradition. Community.**



Melanie Allen is an entrepreneur and community leader. A native Texan, she relocated to Eagan, MN in 1998 to work for 3M. Allen joined 3M as a plant level Industrial Hygienist, immediately after receiving her Masters of Science in Environmental Health Science (EHS) from the School of Public Health at the University of Alabama. Allen was introduced to the EHS field by her aunt who was a Public Health professor and researcher. Allen wanted to secure a career in a sector that projected job growth and opportunities for professional development throughout the years.

Even as a child, she recognized that many of the adults in her life, especially her grandparents, were physically limited by injuries or illnesses that resulted from hard labor and hazardous work environments. Following the lead of her aunt, she decided to use her abilities to protect a cohort of workers across the nation, who often go unheard.

Over the last 22 years, she has done just that. She has held corporate leadership positions for EHS with Ecolab and Allina Hospitals and Clinics. In 2003, Allen founded Safety Skill Builders, LLC, an EHS consulting firm that offers compliance assurance audits and employee education in the areas of personal protective equipment, respiratory protection, hearing conservation, ergonomics, hazard communication, hazardous waste management and industrial hygiene exposure assessment.

Establishing this new business provided Allen with the opportunity to continue her career but with the flexibility she needed to manage her growing family. Starting a business was no easy feat, however Allen did it with grace and excellence. Safety Skill Builders provides its services to some of the region's major corporations including Land O' Lakes, Carleton College and Stericycle.

Today, Allen treasures the quality of life that the Twin Cities community offers. This was not always the case. Feeling isolated and disconnected, she and her then fiancé Calvin Allen moved to Philadelphia seeking a more diversity-looking and inclusive-feeling community. During their time on the East Coast they enjoyed diversity of cultures, but missed the quality of life that they had observed others experience in Minnesota. Two years later, the couple returned to Minnesota. Convinced, Minneapolis-St. Paul was the best place to grow their careers and begin a family, the Allens were determined to overcome the isolation, create their own community and make MSP feel like the home they saw others enjoy.

It took many years, but eventually Allen became well-established in the community. The hard work of acclimating inspired Allen to establish another business, unlike anything she had done before. In 2008, Allen founded Welcome Matters LLC, which specializes in helping organizations retain the professionals of color they recruit and relocate to Minneapolis/St. Paul. Motivated by her own acclimation journey and supported by her devoted husband and mentors, created a successful model for retaining young professionals of color. Welcome Matters LLC provides its services to some of the region's major corporations including United Health Group and Greater MSP – MakeIt.MSP project.

Today Allen manages two successful businesses. She says, "I am able to now live out my entrepreneurial passions because my parents and community invested in me. They made it clear to me that because I was African American, I must obtain a good education, achieve the best credentials possible and always pursue excellence in my craft. As an entrepreneur, I treasure my academic training as a scientist. I credit a large part of my success and ingenuity to the scientific methodology for problem solving that I learned in college and the critical thinking skills that I have practiced over my career thus far."

Allen is deeply invested in community. She is committed to recruiting African American girls into S.T.E.M. careers. She works with Edina Public Schools to help administrators appreciate the new families experience and to develop more inclusive communication and on-boarding practices. Allen serves on the board of the YWCA Minneapolis, and is a member of Minneapolis-St Paul Chapters of Jack and Jill of America, Links Incorporated, and Delta Sigma Theta sorority. She is married to Calvin Allen and lives in Edina with their two blessings Joshua (12) and Noelle (7).

### **Most Rewarding Work Experience**

I enjoy meeting new clients, helping companies solve problems. My work allows me to impact community and raise awareness around issues I'm passionate about.

### **Beacons of Leadership**

I am fortunate to have so many wonderful role models and trail-blazers that I can look to for inspiration as well as call on for advice and support. Three attributes they share that most inspire me are: 1) amazing spirits of perseverance 2) commitment to leverage their position and resources to benefit the communities they serve 3) laser-like focus on results and forward progress.

### **Advice for Aspiring Entrepreneurs/ Regulatory Compliance Professionals**

- Get to know yourself; your talents, purpose and interests.
- Learn to disagree without being disagreeable.
- Never stop learning; keep growing the list of things you are good at. Be multi-talented.
- Choose hobbies that stimulate your creativity. Ask "what if" often.
- Start Simple.
- Ideas are Easy. Implementation is Hard.

If you want to maintain a career in regulatory compliance become an expert in the things most influential in any community; resource conservation (water) and sustainability and resource recovery (waste management).

### **Education**

- University of Alabama at Birmingham, MSPH (1994)
- Texas A&M University, BS (1991)